

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 IO-10 AID-05 EB-07

TRSE-00 /095 W

----- 044544

R 071123Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3940

INFO AMCONSUL UDORN

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 23505

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, TH

SUBJECT: THAI-LAO RELATIONS

REF: VIENTIANE 6184

SUMMARY: NEW PROBLEMS BETWEEN LAOS AND THAILAND HAVE COME TO LIGHT IN RECENT DAYS. NOTWITHSTANDING, THE RTG HOPE THE SUCCESSFUL IENG SARY VISIT WILL HELP INDUE THE LAO TO REACH SIMILAR AGREEMENT TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH NOT OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE, A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS ARE CONTINUING TO TROUBLE THAI-LAO RELATIONS. FIRST, A BANK SOURCE IN BANGKOK REPORTED NOVEMBER 1, THAT, BECAUSE OF LAO FOREIGN EXCHANGE CONTROLS, SEVERAL THAI COMMERCIAL

BANKS FINANCING LETTERS OF CREDIT TO COVER TRADE WITH THAT COUNTRY ARE FACING 100 MILLION BAHT (\$5 MILLION) IN BAD LOANS. FURTHERMORE, LAOS ACCUSED THAILAND OF DELAYING THE TRANSIT OF GOODS DESTINED FOR LAOS, A CHARGE THE RTG PROMPTLY DENIED.

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2. A REPORT OF THE KILLING OF FIVE LAO REFUGEES ATTEMPTING

TO FLEE INTO THAILAND OCTOBER 31 WAS APPARENTLY UNTRUE. CONSULATE UDORN HAS LEARNED, HOWEVER, OF TWO RECENT CASES WHERE MEO REFUGEE BOATS OVERTURNED (WITH 27 OUT OF 34 PEOPLE DROWNING), ALLEGEDLY AFTER PL GUARDS ON THE BANK FIRED WARNING SHOTS. THAI ARE BEING HELD IN LAOS ON CHARGES OF SPYING AND IMPROPER VISAS; A PL LIEUTENANT COLONEL WAS ARRESTED IN SRI CHIANG MAI NOVEMBER 4 FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY; AND THE THAI MFA LEAKED TO THE PRESS THAT THE LAO EMBASSY IN BANGKOK IS UNDERGOING A PURGE.

3. BANGKOK PRESS REPORTED NOVEMBER 7 THAT THE GOVERNOR OF NONG KHAI PROVINCE, KAMPHOL KLINSUKHON, HAS ORDERED HIS PORTION OF THE BORDER WITH LAOS CLOSED INDEFINITELY. ALTHOUGH THE LAO HAD ALREADY CLOSED IT (REF), THE GOVERNOR'S ACTION INCLUDES COMMERCIAL CARGOES WHICH THE LAO ACTION DID NOT.

4. IT IS IN THIS ATMOSPHERE THAT THE RTG STILL HOPES TO ENGAGE THE LAO IN AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE MUTUAL PROBLEMS. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS OPTIMISTIC ALTHOUGH, AS MFA SOUTH-EAST ASIA CHIEF THEP THEWAKUN POINTED OUT NOVEMBER 6, LAOS MAY HAVE ALREADY TRAVELLED TOO FAR DOWN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ROAD TO RETURN. THEP SAID THE RTG IS HOPEFUL THAT THE AGREEMENT TO CO-EXIST WHICH EMERGED FROM THE IENG SARY VISIT WILL SERVE AS A PRECEDENT THAT THE LAO CAN REJECT ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY.

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